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A (dis)Assemblage of the Gallery-Growlery

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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MFA Virginia Commonwealth University
BFA University of Michigan Ann Arbor

Director: Kendall Buster, Associate Professor, Sculpture + Extended Media

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA May 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Participatory Growl.....	1
A Hole.....	3
A Wholly Crisis.....	5
The Gallery-Growlery.....	7
Scattering ‘Hoods.....	9
Bibliography.....	20
Appendix A.....	21
Appendix B.....	22

Abstract

A (dis)ASSEMBLAGE OF THE GALLERY-GROWLERY

By Levester Williams, MFA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2016

Major Director: Kendall Buster, Associate Professor, Sculpture and Extended Media

A (dis)Assemblage of the Gallery-Growlery exhibition and writing presents itself as a site of a morphological exploration of language, sound, and objects in tandem with the irreducibly venting black expression. Venting, the black expression never seeks wholeness within objects or language itself for it is a thing-in-itself. Its presence affords critical reception to a residue of delimiting forms. All growls eschew verbal objects for the manifestation of pure phonetics. A growl in a gallery is the *growl*. The *growl* resounds through the physicality of the objects and gallery. Also, it unwinds the object-among-objects as the phono-present stretches the discursive and existential limits of the Fanonian phenomenon. Hence, the contention and conjunction between physicality and acoustics—the visual and sonic—is the gallery-growlery.

Participatory Growl

Growl.

Yes.

Please

growl

onto

the

very

whiteness

of

this

page.

Growl for Form to form.

A Hole

A gallery is not blank. It possesses material properties and is structured in ways that constitute it as a gallery. Collapsing, folding, expanding, contracting, compressing, depressing, a gallery is a fluid intermediary structured form. Even more, a gallery is a hole gaping for form and matter. Thus, a gaping hole exists and it must be filled.

Growling mouths. Growling stomachs. Growling anuses. Black voids. Black holes in space and time. All gaping for form and matter. Holes. William Pope.L writes about the hole theory—a theory of nothingness. His theory propagates without a point (to make).¹ Nonetheless one (or many) exists. It resides in-between the spaces of the theoretical discourse, away from definitive linguistic acts, and in the imaginary faculty of our minds. Such theoretical elusion and self-reflexivity provides the means to occlude the theory: yet, its paradoxical framing leaves the discourse wide open. The application of the theory ensures failure while its non-activity succeeds in procuring validation. A theory of nothingness has no substance, yet it provides subsistence. For everything could be engaged through holes. Thus, the negativity of a hole becomes the positivity of the vast world itself. *Everything may be considered.*

A gallery as a hole is paradoxical: it is not blank, yet it always lacks. For the gallery's sake, sound and its multiple instantiations is always transitioning through the physical-acoustical

¹ See Appendix A and Appendix B. William Pope.L, Mark Bessire, and Maine College of Art, *William Pope. L: The Friendliest Black Artist in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 76-86.

field of the space. A growl in a gallery is the *growl*. The *growl* in a hole of a gallery amends the lack through provisions of the imagination.

A Wholly Crisis

For black existentialist Frantz Fanon, the phenomenon of language is essential to the “understanding of black man’s dimension for being-for-others.”² That is, to speak is to exist absolutely for the other. An extended Fanonian predicament of being-black (and being-queer and being-perverse) is the presupposed integration into and digestion of normativity through the matrices of language. In short, the economy of differences is articulated through language.

Language situates our position in relation to one another, the body schema: we function always in relation to a schematic representation. The always-in-relation reifies reductive subjectivity.

“Look, a Negro! Look, a Queer! Look, a Pervert!”

Fanon decries: “I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects.”³ He suffocates without the possibility of mobilizing beyond the crisis, and his limits (of theorizing to think beyond the problem) becomes a crisis itself. A wholly crisis exists. A whole hole. An unholy bedding.

The violence of language is the Césairean retrograde;⁴ the poetics of language is the exchange of oxygen; and the transcendence of such is a soulful transmission. All growls eschew

² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008) 1.

³ Ibid, 89.

⁴ Aimé Césaire, a Francophone poet, writes about the detrimental effects of colonization not only for the colonized, but also for the colonizer. He warns that the project of colonization dehumanizes all as the colonial activity based on contempt changes the colonizer to the very thing it resents. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. by Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000) 38-41.

verbal objects for the manifestation of pure phonetics—the call for an immediate phenomenological orgasm.

Levester fills the gaping hole through the *growl* and avoids falling alongside the Fanonian object-among-objects. The *growl* disrupts the “othering” body schema that is accessible in language and unhinges the disjointed, sterilized image(s) attached to subjectivity. It unwinds this wholly crisis as the phono-present stretches the discursive and existential limits of the Fanonian phenomenon. At the whim of its own bodily contractions, the *growl* is not (over)determined through ontological citation of images and archetypes. Its phono-presence announces a soul—a willful dimensionless being. *Fanon* writes. *Levester* growls. Growling mouth. Growling stomach. Growling anus. Language and its propensity to reify subjective relations subsides as the phono-present marshals in various modality of livelihood (called ‘hoods)—whether as objects, subjects, growlers, or etc. I am (a body of) living experiences. Black holes. Black voids. Black planes. Multiplanar.

The Gallery-Growlery

The *growl* resounds through the physicality of objects and a gallery. The dynamic proximity between physicality and acoustics—the visual and sonic—is the gallery-growlery. The primacy of the gallery-growlery is to probe the textual and overdetermined interdependencies of the visual and sound. The sonic requires a reconfiguration of the visual and the linguistic and reveals both as not the only determinants of ‘hood.

Some sing of subjectivity emerging from intersubjectivity where many diverges from one. The (re)sounding of subjectivity confounds such expectations. Deborah Kapchan, a literary and musical scholar, notes the plausibility of a self-determined subject through sound: “*the sound body is a material body that resonates (with) its environment, creating and conducting affect.*”⁵ That is, the proliferation of sound through its mediators allows for porous concretization of the subject(s).

The sound body posits an existence of transitioning and a reality of here-elsewhere—both not immediately found in linguistics. The *growl* does not initiate with the sensory reception of a growl. Spit and breath precede and proceed from a growl. Both presuppose the intensities and bodily engagement of the eventfulness of a growl. The *growl* is the (un)sounding of a growl: it is eclipsed from the objects from which it transpires and expires. Hence, the site occurs at and away from the *growl*. The space before/after/inside the *growl* functions as interstices. Even more, the *growl* (sub)merges in other subliminal subaltern spaces as phonic insertions happen in and

⁵ Deborah Kapchan, “body,” in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 41.

through intermediary forms. So, the sonic does not simply rely on the transpiring object since more mediators exist. In addition, the residue of the sonic does not solely lie within a singular object or space. It disperses. Phonic instantiations destabilize the linguistic regulations of the 'hood: it propels the conception of subject beyond the paradigm of relationality and into fields of sensations. The sole of my soul creases into interstellar places and interstices and vibes out.

Thereby, a (dis)assemblage of the gallery-growlery presents itself as a site of a morphological exploration of language, sound, and objects in tandem with the irreducibly venting black expression. Venting, the black expression never seeks wholeness within objects or language itself for it is a thing-in-itself. Its presence affords critical reception to a residue of delimiting forms. To growl for Form to form is the praxis for my bodily engagement where the sonic precedes and proceeds from the objects. Never settling, my 'hood perpetuate always as a sonic of being.

Scattering ‘Hoods

What is *Levester* (pronounced LUH VES STOR)?

A person.

A (non)orator.

A growler.

A name.

A man.

An object.

A growling person.

A black person.

A queer person.

A perverse person.

A growling (non)orator.

A black (non)orator.

A queer (non)orator.

A perverse (non)orator.

A male (non)orator.

A growling name.

A black name.

A queer name.

A perverse name.

A male name.

A growling man.

A black man.

A queer man.

A perverse man.

A phonetic object.

A growling object.
A named object.
A black object.
A queer object.
A perverse object.
A growling black person.
A growling queer person.
A growling perverse person.
A growling black (non)orator.
A growling queer (non)orator.
A growling perverse (non)orator.
A growling male (non)orator.
A growling black name.
A growling queer name.
A growling perverse name.
A growling male name.
A growling black man.
A growling queer man.
A growling perverse man.
A growling named object.
A growling phonetic object.
A growling black object.
A growling queer object.
A growling perverse object.
A black growling person.
A black queer person.
A black perverse person.
A black growling (non)orator.
A black queer (non)orator.
A black perverse (non)orator.
A black male (non)orator.

A black growling name.
A black queer name.
A black perverse name.
A black male name.
A black growling man.
A black queer man.
A black perverse man.
A black named object.
A black phonetic object.
A black queer object.
A black perverse object.
A queer black person.
A queer growling person.
A queer perverse person.
A queer black (non)orator.
A queer growling (non)orator.
A queer perverse (non)orator.
A queer male (non)orator.
A queer black name.
A queer growling name.
A queer perverse name.
A queer male name.
A queer black man.
A queer growling man.
A queer perverse man.
A queer named object.
A queer phonetic object.
A queer black object.
A queer growling object.
A queer perverse object.
A perverse black person.

A perverse growling person.
A perverse queer person.
A perverse black (non)orator.
A perverse growling (non)orator.
A perverse queer (non)orator.
A perverse male (non)orator.
A perverse black name.
A perverse growling name.
A perverse queer name.
A perverse male name.
A perverse black man.
A perverse growling man.
A perverse queer man.
A perverse named object.
A perverse phonetic object.
A perverse growling object.
A perverse black object.
A perverse queer object.
A person in a gallery.
A (non)orator in a gallery.
A growler in a gallery.
A name in a gallery.
A man in a gallery.
An object in a gallery.
A growling person in a gallery.
A black person in a gallery.
A queer person in a gallery.
A perverse person in a gallery.
A growling (non)orator in a gallery.
A black (non)orator in a gallery.
A queer (non)orator in a gallery.

A perverse (non)orator in a gallery.
A male (non)orator in a gallery.
A growling name in a gallery.
A black name in a gallery.
A queer name in a gallery.
A perverse name in a gallery.
A male name in a gallery.
A growling man in a gallery.
A black man in a gallery.
A queer man in a gallery.
A perverse man in a gallery.
A phonetic object in a gallery.
A growling object in a gallery.
A named object in a gallery.
A black object in a gallery.
A queer object in a gallery.
A perverse object in a gallery.
A growling black person in a gallery.
A growling queer person in a gallery.
A growling perverse person in a gallery.
A growling black (non)orator in a gallery.
A growling queer (non)orator in a gallery.
A growling perverse (non)orator in a gallery.
A growling male (non)orator in a gallery.
A growling black name in a gallery.
A growling queer name in a gallery.
A growling perverse name in a gallery.
A growling male name in a gallery.
A growling black man in a gallery.
A growling queer man in a gallery.
A growling perverse man in a gallery.

A growling named object in a gallery.
A growling phonetic object in a gallery.
A growling black object in a gallery.
A growling queer object in a gallery.
A growling perverse object in a gallery.
A black growling person in a gallery.
A black queer person in a gallery.
A black perverse person in a gallery.
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A black male (non)orator in a gallery.
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A black queer name in a gallery.
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A queer black name in a gallery.

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A perverse black man in a gallery.
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A perverse queer man in a gallery.
A perverse named object in a gallery.
A perverse phonetic object in a gallery.
A perverse growling object in a gallery.
A perverse black object in a gallery.
A perverse queer object in a gallery.
A person in the hole of a gallery.

A (non)orator in the hole of a gallery.
A growler in the hole of a gallery.
A name in the hole of a gallery.
A man in the hole of a gallery.
An object in the hole of a gallery.
A growling person in the hole of a gallery.
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A perverse queer man in the hole of a gallery.

A perverse named object in the hole of a gallery.

A perverse phonetic object in the hole of a gallery.

A perverse growling object in the hole of a gallery.

A perverse black object in the hole of a gallery.

A perverse queer object in the hole of a gallery.

A growling oration.

A phonetics of oration.

A blacking of oration.

A queering of oration.

A perversion of oration.

A perversion of naming.

A growler among objects.

A naming of perversion.

A perversion of growling;

A black man gaping in the hole of a gallery.

A black object against the hole of a gallery.

A growler for pure phonetic objects.

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Appendix A

Williams Pope.L: The Friendliest Black Artist in America

Excerpt from artist writing, *Hole Theory: Parts Four & Five*, p81

(How thing fut

fit together)

But Hilarity. PARITY (see freud

viz Wittgenstein)

7. Holes are not the point.

Holes are empty theory.

7.1 When I say—

Hole theory explains nothing

This is in order to create

A platform from which

To engage everything.

Sentence

8. Beneath this ~~sentence~~ is a hole.

8.1 You do not see it?

8.2 ~~Do you see it?~~

8.3 Why? Because it is not there?

8.3.1 However, I could insist that it si there;

And further that this invisible hole

Is an illustration of my belief

Appendix B

Williams Pope.L: The Friendliest Black Artist in America

Excerpt from artist writing, *Hole Theory: Parts Four & Five*, page 83

9.2 Hole Theory presupposes

That there is possibility

Even in the face of nothing

Very American. ~~What of it?~~

9.21 What I mean by having

Something is the fantasy

That having is possessing. And

That possessing is knowing.

deodorizing

9.3 Therefore this sort of theorizing

Could only come from someone

Who believes in having things

As a political condition.

9.4 Conversely, this theory

Could only come from someone

Who lacks something

As a political condition.